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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 003923

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: NAWAZ DEPORTED ON RETURN TO ISLAMABAD

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 3901

[1](#)B. ISLAMABAD 3873

[1](#)C. ISLAMABAD 3706

[1](#)D. ISLAMABAD 3692

[1](#)E. LAHORE 524

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was deported from Islamabad to Saudi Arabia within hours of his return to Pakistan on September 10. Security forces kept the capital under tight security. Senior opposition leaders were placed under house arrest, and only small-scale demonstrations have occurred. So far, Nawaz's party has filed a contempt of court petition before the Supreme Court; however, there was no court hearing before his departure. At mid-day on September 10, the country remains calm. The unknown is what the Supreme Court will do now. End Summary.

Nawaz Returns to Pakistan, But
Deported Within Hours to Saudi Arabia

[1](#)2. (U) Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was deported -- reportedly to Saudi Arabia -- about five hours after his return to Pakistan on September 10.

[1](#)3. (U) Sharif's plane landed at approximately 0840 in Islamabad to an airport in lockdown status. He was met by security personnel and remained on the plane after other passengers had disembarked. Approximately two hours after the plane landed, Nawaz exited the plane for the airport's VIP lounge, where he reportedly met with Pakistani and Saudi officials for "negotiations" and was later placed on a plane bound for Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Security Forces Raid PML-N Office, Block
Off Airport, Arrest Senior Political Leaders

[1](#)4. (U) There were reports that over 1,000 political activists in Rawalpindi and Islamabad were arrested in recent days. Late in the evening on September 9, police reportedly raided the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) office in Islamabad, arresting party workers and disconnecting telephones. By the morning of September 10, Pakistan's security forces had effectively shut off access to Islamabad Airport. Roads leading to the airport were blocked, cell

phones around the airport were jammed, and no Nawaz supporters reached the airport. The government also shut down the Grand Trunk road linking Islamabad to Nawaz's power base in Lahore.

15. (C) Numerous prominent opposition leaders were placed under house arrest early September 10, including PML-N Chairman Raja Zafar ul-Haq, Jamaat Islami (JI) leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) leader Fazlur Rehman. JI leader Liaqat Baloch was also taken into police custody for 30 days. Nawaz's party has been working with an alliance of these religious parties. Police reacted quickly and dispersed pro-Nawaz crowds that assembled near the airport, in Islamabad, in Gujrat, and at a bridge on the border between Punjab and the Northwest Frontier Province. Several opposition leaders were able to talk to reporters from their detention sites with the press while Nawaz was at the airport.

Saudis Make Last-Minute Appeal to Nawaz Not to Return,
Nawaz Rejects It, Also Rejected Musharraf's Emissaries

16. (U) During a September 8 joint press conference with President Musharraf in Islamabad, Saudi intelligence chief Prince Muqrin bin Abdul Aziz and Saad Hariri, son of the assassinated Lebanese PM, appealed to Nawaz "for the sake of stability in Pakistan" to abide by the agreement he had signed in 2000 with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to remain outside of Pakistan for 10 years. Aziz said that the deal had been brokered and guaranteed by the Saudi royal family to help Sharif get out of jail. (Note: Nawaz was convicted for

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hijacking and corruption and sentenced to life imprisonment plus fourteen years. End Note.) Acknowledging the recent Supreme Court ruling that Sharif should be permitted to return to Pakistan, Aziz said, "Which comes first, the agreement or the Supreme Court ruling? We fully respect the Supreme Court...but you still have an agreement."

17. (U) Later on September 8 at a press conference in London, Nawaz publicly rejected the Saudi appeal and reiterated his determination to return to Pakistan. While he confirmed that he had signed an agreement with the Saudi government in 2000, he asserted that he made a verbal agreement with the Saudi royal family that the exile would be for five years only.

18. (U) On September 9, Nawaz confirmed for the first time that Musharraf had sent emissaries to him in London with an eye towards entering into a dialogue, but that he had rejected the offer because he would "not deviate from his principles."

19. (C) Comment: The deportation came as no surprise (reftels), although the three-hour "negotiation" at the airport produced a Keystone Cops atmosphere that no doubt will produce multiple conspiracy theories in tomorrow's press. Effective police presence and the large number of pre-emptive arrests has limited the number and scope of demonstrations so far, but our consulate in Lahore also reports that Nawaz's last-minute change of flight routes -- switching from Gulf Air to PIA -- and his sudden decision to leave his younger brother, Shahbaz, in London hampered local party efforts to organize welcome events. The change in flight plans also confused the press, many of whom were, much to their irritation, forced to fly on the Gulf Air flight without Nawaz. Rumors began to circulate around Lahore last night that Nawaz had cut a deal with the Saudis and with the government, which also prompted some party activists to stay home.

110. (C) Comment, cont: The Court did not take an opportunity to block Nawaz's departure, but it may issue contempt of court charges against government officials. This may well

provoke demonstrations if the government defies the order to "produce" Nawaz. For now, however, Musharraf likely is breathing a sigh of relief. End Comment.
PATTERSON